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ABSTRACT

This study explored how American and Taiwanese students viewed the ideal model of a healthy family in the 1980s and showed that contemporary families are changing and coping, not breaking up and dying. The subjects were 649 students from six universities in Indiana and Taiwan. The questionnaire was composed of 127 items that focused on five issues: (1) attitudes toward different family lifestyles; (2) opinions of family problems and family life in America and Taiwan; (3) family strength measurement; (4) characteristics of a healthy family; and (5) appraisal of childhood, parental marriage, religiosity, and other general demographic information. Although there were significant differences in their views on the characteristics of a healthy family, 16 characteristics were identified by over 85 percent of the college students studied as being related to a healthy family. Twenty-one social demographic variables were found to have significant correlations with either the family life evaluation or the family strengths measurement. Stumbling blocks that hamper a good marriage and a healthy family also were identified by the respondents, the greatest one being poor communication. Significant differences were found between the subjects in Indiana and Taiwan. Surprisingly, a higher percentage of Chinese college students (89%) than American college students (64.3%) expressed their acceptance of the choice of a divorce for an unhealthy family. However, in terms of non-traditional family life-styles, the Chinese subjects appear to hold a more conservative viewpoint than their American counterparts. Contains 58 references. (CK)

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Characteristics of a Healthy Family and Family Strengths: A Cross-Cultural Study

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Abstract

Contemporary families are changing and coping, not breaking and dying. The purpose of identifying common characteristics of a healthy family is to take a positive approach to family intervention and enrichment. this study aims to explore how American and Chinese college students viewed the ideal model of a healthy family in the 1980's. the subjects were 649 students from 6 universities in Indiana and Taiwan. The questionnaire was composed of 127 items which focused on five issues.

Although there were significant differences in their views on the characteristics of a healthy family, 16 characteristics were identified by over 85% of the college students studied as being related to a healthy family. Twenty-one social demographic variables were found to have significant correlations with either the family life evaluation or the family strengths measurement. Stumbling blocks that hamper a healthy family were also identified by the respondents. Also, the data yielded significant differences between the research subjects in Indiana and Taiwan. However, it is important to point out that over four-fifths of both sets of the study samples agreed that lack of communication was one of the key causes of family and marital problems. Attitudes toward different family life-styles were also explored and compared.

The study results may provide some foundation upon which to develop a positive model for family education and a marriage enrichment program.

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Characteristics of a Healthy Family and Family Strengths: A Cross-Cultural Study

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Introduction

Contemporary families are changing and coping, not breaking and dying. Problems and conflicts are inevitable in all social groups, including families. Different family lifestyles are seen as variant, not deviant. Every family has problems; the ability and willingness to recognize and cope with their problems are the keys to differentiating healthy from unhealthy families.

Family strengths and characteristics of a healthy family are studied by scholars around the world (Prigman et al., 1986; Cassas et al., 1984; Curran, 1983; King, 1980; Lin, 1984; Milofsky, 1981; Stevenson at al., 1982; Stinnet, 1983; Stinnett, 1985; Stinnett & DeFrain, 1989). The purpose of identifying the common characteristics of a healthy family is to take a positive approach to family intervention and enrichment. This approach focuses on a family's strengths rather than weaknesses. In a changing society, families need to work harder to adjust and to survive. A list of the characteristics of a healthy family provides each family with a bench mark for self-evaluation.

Several recent studies have documented the changing character of American family life (Scanzon, 1983; Guilck, 1984; Wetzel,1990). More than half of all married women work outside the home. The size of the average American family dropped from 3.76 persons per household in 1940 to 3.67 in 1960 and 3.16 in 1989, reflecting a strong trend for the decreasing number of children or even no children at all in a marriage. More than one million divorces (1,194,000) take place in the United States annually (National Center for Health Statistics, 1993). Almost one-fourth of family households with children are maintained by a single parent. These are but some of the statistics of the changing American families today.

At the Second Sino-American Conference on Social Welfare Development in 1984 and Family Wellness Conference in 1992, social work educators and the social researchers revealed the changing patterns of marriage and family life in Taiwan which, in many ways, resemble the trends in the United States (Chien, 1984; Lin, 1992; Yi, 1984). In addition, a number of speakers at the National Conference on the "Role of Women in the National Development

Process," which was held in Taiwan, reported the dilemma of professional women in combining career and family roles (Lin, Lan, and Liu, 1985). Lin and Moore's study (1984) found that over three quarters of their research subjects (American female college students) plan to be married, have children and pursue a career upon graduation. The research questionnaire was then distributed to their Chinese counterparts in 1984. The data revealed some differences between the American and Chinese samples in marriage and family plans, in attitudes toward the meaning of work, and on the conceptualization of the ideal type of "integrated woman" (Editor of Journal of "Teacher Chang", 1984). However, recent social change in Taiwan has allowed women to have new opportunities in their management careers (Cheng & Liao, 1993).

Attitudes toward marital relationships and family life have been reported as important indicators for predicting the quality of marital relations and family strength. Tolerance of differences appears to be one social trend in the 1980's. Recent studies documented the changing character of American life. It is generally concluded that most people will tolerate lifestyles far different from their own. Previous studies have focused upon changes in society and attitudes toward these diverse life-styles. Very few studies have addressed the issue of the impact of changing attitudes on the definition of a "healthy family" and the evaluation of family strengths. The present study aims to explore how American and Chinese college students viewed the ideal model of a healthy family in the 1980's. The study also analyzes attitudes on the causes of family problems and on nontraditional marriage and family life styles.

Method

Subject The subjects were 336 students from three universities in Indiana and 313 students from three universities in Taiwan. The subjects included students from both public and private universities located in metropolitan and small town areas. Females comprised 59.53% of the survey population with males comprising the remaining 40.48%. Subjects ranged in age from "under 19" to "23 years and over." A demographic profile of the subjects is presented in Table 1.

Instruments Questionnaires were completed during class time and returned to the researchers through campus mail or by the instructors who administered the questionnaires. A total of 639 questionnaires were collected from both samples (America and Taiwan). This represents an 83% return rate. The questionnaire yielded a missing data rate of less than 0.2% in most questions. The questionnaire is composed of 127 items which focus on the following general categories: (1) attitudes toward different family life-styles; (2) opinions of family problems and family life in America/Taiwan; (3) family strength measurement; (4) characteristics of a healthy family; (5) appraisal of childhood,

parental marriage, religiosity, and other general demographic information.

In answering attitude statements, respondents were instructed to rate each of the attitudes on a one to five point Likert-type scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree or from very important to very unimportant.

Family Inventories designed by Olson, et al. (1982) was the instrument used in the present study to measure family strength. The family strength scale contains twelve items broken down into two dimensions: Pride (a seven item scale identifying pride, loyalty, trust, and respect attributes) and Accord (a five item scale tapping a family's sense of competency.) Olson, et al. (1982: 121-136) reported an alpha (Cronbach's) reliability of 0.83 (0.88 for Pride and 0.72 for Accord) and a test rate and reliability coefficient of 0.58 (0.73 for Pride and 0.79 for Accord) for the instrument. Factor analyses using orthogonal and oblique rotations were computed on the present research samples for replication. Appendix 1 indicates factor loadings from the initial instrument by Olson, et al. (1982), and Appendix 2 indicates the scoring method for the instrument for the present study, which was adopted from Olson, et al. (1982).

Procedure for Data Analysis The SPSS was used for data processing. A number of techniques were selected for data analysis: (1) frequency distribution; (2) chi-square analysis; (3) Pearson correlation coefficient analysis; (4) analysis of variance (ANVOA); and (5) regression analysis.

Results

Characteristics of a Healthy Family In the last two decades, the quest for self-fulfillment has developed into a mainstream in American culture (Yankelovich, 1981). There is evidence that the quality of family life is extremely important to individual growth and the community's mental health. Instead of focusing on the pitfalls of families, there is a trend, among social researchers, to identify the positive family models and what healthy families are like (Curran, 1983; Pollak, 1957; Pratt, 1979; Lin, 1984 & 1994; Milofsky, 1985; Stinnett, 1983; Stinnett, Walters, & Stinnett, 1991). A number of terms have been used to connote the characteristics of a healthy family. The term "family strengths" is used to refer to the resources a family has for adapting and integrating (Burr, 1973; Hill, 1954; McCubbin & Patterson, 1982). Other researchers have described family strengths as those qualities which contribute to a happy marriage, a successful marriage, and the stability of marriage (Lewis & Spanier, 1980; Hansen, 1981; Glenn & McLanahan, 1982; Rollins & Feldman, 1970; Olson, McCubbin, & Associates, 1983).

Family sociologists Nick Stinnett, et al. (1981) conducted the Family Strengths Research Project involving one

thousand "strong" families across the nation. They identified the following six qualities common to the strong family: (1) appreciation, (2) spending time together, (3) commitment, (4) good communication patterns, (5) high degree of religious orientation, and (6) ability to deal with crises in a positive manner. Syndicated columnist Dolores Curran surveyed five hundred family professionals--including teachers, doctors, pastors, social workers and others--and concluded that healthy families share certain common traits. Namely, the healthy family: (1) communicates and listens, (2) affirms and supports one another, (3) teaches respect for others, (4) develops a sense of trust, (5) has a sense of play and humor, (6) exhibits a sense of shared responsibility, (7) teaches a sense of right and wrong, (8) has a strong sense of family in which rituals and traditions abound, (9) has a balance of interaction among members, (10) has a shared religious core, (11) respects the privacy of one another, (12) values service to one another, (13) fosters family table time and conversation, (14) shares leisure time, and (15) admits to and seeks help for problems.

Findings from the present research are closely related to characteristics identified by the previous writers. As noted in Table 2, out of 37 statements about family relations and dynamics, 16 statements were selected by over 85% of both Chinese and American college students as important/very important. The statements were as follows:

1. Family members possess a sense of "family feeling."
2. Family members are supportive of each other through difficult times.
3. It is easy for everyone in the family to express his/her opinion.
4. Family members share household responsibilities.
5. Family members say what they think.
6. Family members feel very close to each other.
7. Family members like to spend time with each other.
8. Family members show respect for each other's opinion.
9. There is a sense of humor in the family.
10. Family members show respect for individual privacy.
11. There is concern for other family members' happiness.
12. Husband and wife are courteous to each other.
13. Family members affirm and support each other.
14. Children have a pleasant childhood to remember.
15. The family lets each child have a chance to grow.
16. Family members show appreciation to each other.

When comparing Chinese and American students' views on the characteristics of a healthy family, there were significant differences in their views on 22 statements (Table 2).

<u>The Evaluation of Family Life</u> The respondents were asked to evaluate their families on a scale from one to ten, with one being unhealthy and ten being healthy. Table 3 reveals that the majority

of the respondents rated their families as being pretty "healthy" (with mean score 7.42 for American subjects and 7.30 for Chinese subjects). However, both sets of subjects rated families at large as less "healthy" than their own families (with mean score 5.49 for American subjects and 6.43 for Chinese subjects).

A second order analysis was used to see whether there were significant correlations between students' evaluations of their family life and some selected demographic variables. The following variables were found to have significant negative correlations with the evaluation of family life: (1) parents' marital status at the present, (2) appraisal of the happiness of parents' marriage, and (3) the appraisal of childhood happiness.

Religion has long been considered as one of the key variables between marriage success and a happy family life (Filsinger & Wilson, 1984; Stinnett, et al., 1981). In the present study, it was found that the importance of religion to the individual and his/her family's everyday life is significantly correlated with the self evaluation of the family life. The more that one thinks religion is important in conducting one's life, the higher the rating of one's family life on the evaluation continuum.[1]

Finally, attitudes toward having children are also significantly correlated to the family life evaluation[2] (Table 4). Namely, the higher the desire for having children, the higher the rating on the family life evaluation scale.

In a separate question, the respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement that "Family life is, on the whole, less healthy than it was years ago." It was found that 43.0% of the combined sample "agree/strongly agreed" with statement, 22.5% showed "no opinion," and 34.3% indicated "disagree/strongly disagree."

The Pearson Correlation showed a negative correlation between the opinions from this statement and the family life rating on families at large ($r = -0.074$, $p = 0.03$). Namely, those who agreed with the statement would also have a higher tendency in rating family life at large at the lower (unhealthy) end of the unhealthy-healthy continuum.

<u>The Measurement of Family Strengths</u> There have been a number of empirical studies on family strengths (Beam, 1979; Davis, 1980; McCubbin, et al., 1980; McCubbin, Comeau & Harkins, 1982; Pearlin & Schooler, 1978; Stinnett & Sauer, 1977). The comprehensive instrument for examining the strengths of families was designed by Olson, et al. (1982). The instrument is based on prominent literature in family strengths studies. The instrument contains 12 items or attitude statements that elicit specific information regarding perceptions about family strengths. When answering Family Strengths statements, respondents were instructed to rate

each statement on a one to five point scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Scoring was done on Family Strengths by acquiring a sum score for the 12 items with a two-dimensional scale. The five statements (Questions 33, 35, 37, 38, and 42) that were negatively worded were flipped by subtracting the sum from the constant of 30 and adding the remaining statements.

The mean score for the Accord dimension from the US sample was 16.50, while being 12.51 for the Pride dimension. When combining both US and Chinese samples, it was found that there was a significant correlation ($r = -.35$, $p = .001$, $N = 639$) between Pride and Accord dimensions. There were also a strong correlation between Family Strengths and own family life evaluation ($r = -0.37$, $p = 0.01$, $N = 639$). This means that the higher (healthier) the score on the self (own) family life evaluation, the lower the score (stronger) on the Family Strengths measurement.

A number of social background variables were found to have a significant correlation with Family Strengths (Table 4). They were:

1. Age (the younger the age, the stronger the Family Strengths);
2. Marital status (the Family Strengths and broken marriage had a negative correlation);
3. Grades (the higher the grades, the stronger the Family Strengths);
4. Parental marriage (the higher the respondent's appraisal of the happiness of the respondent's parents' marriage, the stronger the Family Strengths);
5. Childhood (the higher the respondent's childhood, the stronger the Family Strengths);
6. Desire for children (the higher the degree of desire for children, the stronger the Family Strengths);
7. Mother's employment (respondents with working mothers showed stronger Family Strengths); and
8. The respondents' summer employment status (those who have worked at least a 20 hour/week summer job between school years showed stronger Family Strengths).

Finally, very few variances were found among different demographic groups. Only the following two variables showed a significant difference between groups and their scores on Family Strengths: 1. parent's marital status ($F = 2.08$, $p = 0.06$) and 2. family's financial decision ($F = 2.97$ $p = 0.03$).

Religious Activity and Family Strengths The positive relationship between religiosity and marital stability (Shram, 1980) and marital adjustment (Hunt and King, 1978) have been documented. Filsinger and Wilson's (1984) study found religiosity to be the most predictive variable on marital adjustment. Glenn and Weaver's (1978) multivariate study noted the strongest predictor of marital happiness was church attendance. The National Study of Family Strengths, which was cited earlier, pointed out

that there was a strong correlation between religion and success and happiness in all aspects of individual life, including family life (Stinnett & DeFrain, 1989). Findings from the present study were consistent with other studies on family strengths and religion. The present study did not adopt the religiosity scales used in other studies (Clayton & Gladden, 1974; Glock & Stark, 1965, 1968; Wilkinson & Tauner, 1980; & DeJong et al., 1976). Through factor analysis, a simple scale was used for the present study. The scale was composed from the following questions: "How important is religion to your family's everyday activities?" "Are you a church member?" "How important is religion to you in conducting your everyday life?" "Are your parents church members?" "How often do you attend religious services?" Although these questions did not consist of the dimensions of religious belief, religious ritual, religious experience, religious knowledge, and social consequences, the sum of these questions provided a conceptualization of the religious activity of the individual and his/her family.[3]

A significant correlation between religious activity and Family Strengths was found ($r = 0.06$, $p = 0.06$). This means that the higher the degree of religious activity (i.e., low response score), the stronger the Family Strengths. However, religious activity and family life evaluation on families at large showed a strong negative correlation ($r = -0.16$, $p < 0.001$). This means that the higher the degree of religious activity, the lower the rating on the unhealthy--healthy continuum for families at large. However, the correlation between religious activity and own family evaluation was not significant ($r = 0.12$, $p = 0.39$).

Opinions of National Family Problems and Family Life Marriage and the family take place in a social context. In the industrialized societies, a number of factors have contributed to the high divorce rate and the rising incidence of family problems (Colburn, Lin, and Moore, 1993). These include societal attitudes, the changing nature of marriage and the family and economic factors (Knox and Schact, 1994). Certain personal factors can also lead to dissatisfaction with an individual's marriage and family life. In the present study, 21 statements relating to attitudes about cases of high divorce rate and family problems were listed. The respondents were asked, "To what extent do you agree or disagree that this is a stumbling block that hampers a healthy family?" The following statements were agreed/strongly agreed by over 50% of all respondents (see Table 5):

1. This is the "me" generation (68.0%)
2. The trend toward the general acceptance of divorce (65.9%)
3. Emphasis on career and success (60.9%)
4. Poverty and unemployment (66.7%)
5. Inflation (50.7%)
6. Decreasing value on marriage and family life (60.1%)
7. Emphasis on sexual diversity (56.2%)

8. The trend toward a general acceptance of cohabitation before marriage (53.5%)
9. Poor communication (88.6%)
10. Strain of child rearing (56.2%)
11. Independence of each other (53.2%)
12. Lack of respect for each other's privacy (63.5%)
13. Pressure from society in general (60.1%)

As can be seen in Table 5, an overwhelming majority of the American (85.2%) and Chinese (92.0%) college students agreed/strongly agreed that the lack of communication or poor communication was a key stumbling block to a healthy family. Also, a significant difference between American and Chinese college students' opinions of the causes of marriage and family problems existed for all but five of the 21 statements.

Attitudes Toward Different Family Life-Styles Many industrialized societies are experimenting with a number of new family forms, some of which are apt to be found functional and satisfying and gradually to be widely institutionalized. Other forms are considered to be dysfunctional and to create marital and family conflicts (Lin, 1993). The dramatic change in attitudes and values toward family life has been studied in recent years (Yankelovich, 1981; Sussman, 1985; Gallup, 1982, Lin & Moore, 1983). Results from the present study suggested college students' support of the egalitarian marriage. Close to 90% of the surveyed students agreed/strongly agreed that "housekeeping, child rearing and financial support should be equally shared by spouses." The answer to a similar statement further supported the necessity of a dual career (or two-job) family. Close to three quarters (70.8%) of the respondents disagreed/strongly disagreed with the statement that "the dual-career or two-job family has led to a less healthy family situation than did the male-breadwinner, female-housewife family arrangement." Attitudes toward divorce were found to be acceptable by the majority of the respondents. The finding showed 76.2% of all respondents agreed/strongly agreed with the statement that "after other alternatives have been explored, divorce is an acceptable cause of action for an unhealthy marriage." It is surprising to point out that a higher percentage of Chinese college students (89.0%) than American college students (64.3%) in the present study expressed their acceptance of the choice of a divorce for an unhealthy family. However, in terms of nontraditional family life-styles, the Chinese subjects appear to hold a somewhat more conservative viewpoint than their American counterpart. There were significant differences between American and Chinese college students on all statements concerning different family lifestyles with the exception of one, i.e., "The family life is, on the whole,less healthy than it was years ago" (see Table 6).

Summary

In the present study, the term "healthy family" has been used as a synonym for "family strength." In the introduction to Building

Family Strength: Blueprints for Action, Stinnett (1979:2) defined family strengths as "those relationship patterns, interpersonal skills and competencies, and social and psychological characteristics which create a sense of positive family identity, promote satisfying and fulfilling interaction among family members, encourage the development of the potential of the family group and individual family members, and contribute to the family's ability to deal effectively with stress and crises." Researchers, educators, counselors, ministers and parents have acknowledged that the prevention of serious marital and family problems through the strengthening of family life is essential to the well-being of society (Lin, 1992 & 1993).

Although there were significant differences in their views on the characteristics of a healthy family, 16 characteristics were differences in views of the American and Taiwan college students concerning the characteristics of a healthy family, 16 characteristics were identified by both groups of students as being related to a healthy family. In addition, 21 social demographic variables were found to correlate significantly with family-life evaluation or the family strengths measurement.

In term of attitudes toward different family lifestyles, the results were consistent with previous findings concerning a trend toward greater acceptance of nontraditional family lifestyles--childless family, single-parent family, cohabitation, dual-career family, premarital sex, equal division of labor, and divorce. It was found the college students in Taiwan were less accepting of the lifestyles of single-parent family, cohabitation, premarital sex, and dual-career family than were their American counterparts.

While it cannot be explained from the data in this study why students perceived characteristics of a healthy family as they did, the findings may provide some foundation on which to develop a positive model for family life education and marriage enrichment programs (Lin, 1987).[4]

TABLE 1

Demographic Background of American and Tawainese Subjects in the Study

	Percentage		
	America	Tawain	Total
Age			
Under 19	13.2	1.9	7.7
19	29.8	17.1	23.5
20	22.1	28.4	25.2
21	8.9	30.0	19.4
23	21.8	9.7	15.8
Religion			
Protestant	54.5	11.1	33.3
Catholic	22.8	2.3	13.0
Jewish/Buddhist	0.6	23.8	11.6
Other	13.2	2.3	7.8
None	8.9	60.6	33.6
Marital Status			
Single	79.4	99.9	89.0
Married	11.7	0.0	5.9
Divorced	4.0	0.6	2.7
Separated	0.9	0.3	0.5
Widowed	0.0	0.0	0.0
Remarried	1.2	0.0	0.6
Other	2.8	0.0	1.3
Social Economic Status			
Lower class	9.8	1.9	5.9
Upper class	7.4	1.0	4.2
Middle class	79.7	95.8	87.8
Do not know	3.1	1.3	2.2
Sex			
Male	45.4	35.2	40.3
Female	54.6	64.8	59.7

TABLE 1 (continued)

	Percentage		
	America	Tawain	Total
Number of Siblings			
None	6.2	2.6	4.4
One	21.4	6.5	14.0
Two	22.3	24.9	23.6
Three	21.4	25.2	23.3
Four or more	28.8	40.8	34.8
Class Level			
Freshman	45.2	15.2	30.2
Sophomore	32.3	46.1	39.2
Junior	11.1	29.4	20.3
Senior	9.2	8.7	9.0
Graduate student	0.0	0.0	0.0
Other	1.8	0.6	1.3
College Grades			
90+	10.2	0.6	5.4
80-89	55.4	34.4	44.9
70-79	33.4	56.8	45.1
60-69	0.9	7.5	4.2
0-59	0.0	0.6	0.3
Father's Employment Status			
Full-time	81.5	70.5	76.0
Part-time	1.5	10.1	5.8
Unemployed	1.5	1.3	1.4
Househusband	0.0	1.0	0.5
Retired	7.7	9.7	8.7
Other	7.7	7.5	7.6
Mother's Employment Status			
Full-time	54.6	26.6	40.6
Part-time	17.9	14.3	16.1
Unemployed	2.5	0.6	1.6
Housewife	18.2	54.5	36.4
Retired	3.4	0.6	2.0
Other	3.4	3.2	3.3
Income			
Far below average	1.2	2.6	1.9
Below average	11.2	14.6	12.9
Average	42.2	64.1	53.2
Above average	39.8	13.3	26.6
Far above average	2.8	0.3	1.6
Do not know	2.8	5.2	4.0
Work during Current School Year (full- or part-time)			
Yes	72.8	46.3	59.6
No	27.2	53.7	40.5
Summer Part-time Job			
Yes	87.2	58.0	72.6
No	12.8	42.0	27.4

Note: Combined totals may not be 100 percent due to rounding.

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TABLE 2

Percentage Distributions on Opinions Regarding Characteristics of a Healthy Family

Characteristic	Opinions of a Healthy Family: Very Imp./Imp. United States	Taiwan	Total	No Opinon United States	Taiwan	Total	Unimp./Very Unimp. United States	Taiwan	Total	Signif-icance
Family feeling	95.1	99.6	97.4	4.0	0.3	2.2	0.9	0.0	0.5	*
Support through difficult times	97.9	99.7	99.1	1.2	0.3	0.6	0.9	0.0	0.4	ns
Ability to express feelings	90.5	96.4	93.3	6.4	3.5	5.2	3.1	0.0	1.6	*
Total input on decisions	83.7	83.9	83.8	11.4	11.3	11.3	4.9	4.8	4.8	ns
Doing things together	82.7	71.6	77.2	10.8	16.2	13.0	6.5	12.3	9.4	*
Members do their own thing	31.6	12.3	22.4	28.2	24.3	26.6	40.2	63.4	51.8	*
Knowing each other's friends	61.0	65.7	62.9	14.4	18.4	16.1	24.6	14.2	20.8	ns
Sharing household responsibilities	90.2	85.2	87.8	5.2	10.0	7.7	4.6	3.9	4.4	*
Saying what is thought	87.7	96.5	91.8	7.7	2.3	5.3	4.6	1.3	2.6	*
Close feelings toward each other	91.7	95.2	93.1	5.5	3.2	4.7	2.8	1.6	2.1	ns
Use of new ways to solve problems	69.8	64.2	66.8	19.7	27.1	23.5	10.4	8.1	9.6	ns
Spend time with each other	88.8	90.9	89.8	7.4	7.1	7.3	3.7	1.9	3.2	ns
Approve of each other's friends	62.0	69.9	65.4	12.3	18.8	15.6	25.6	11.0	18.4	*
Share interests and hobbies	68.3	77.1	72.7	14.2	11.9	13.0	17.5	11.0	14.3	ns
Show respect for privacy	95.7	95.1	95.4	3.4	3.5	3.1	0.9	1.0	0.9	ns
Share same religion	51.6	23.6	37.6	16.3	29.0	22.7	32.1	47.4	39.7	*
Has traditions and rituals	58.4	46.9	52.7	18.5	26.6	22.4	23.1	26.9	25.0	*
Show respect for other's opinions	95.1	97.4	96.2	2.8	2.6	2.7	2.1	0.1	1.1	ns
Sense of humor	94.4	91.3	93.0	3.1	7.1	5.0	2.4	1.6	2.1	ns
Children	49.7	61.9	55.5	19.6	20.0	19.9	30.7	18.1	24.6	*
Both parents enjoy successful careers	49.8	54.5	52.2	17.5	22.9	20.2	22.6	22.6	22.6	*
Financial security	79.5	89.6	84.2	9.8	5.5	7.8	10.7	4.9	8.0	*
Working mother	11.1	21.6	16.5	25.8	33.2	29.3	63.1	45.1	54.1	*
Concern for others' happiness	96.0	93.2	94.6	4.0	5.2	4.6	0.0	1.6	0.8	ns
Share common goal	67.1	72.9	69.6	22.8	16.5	19.9	10.2	10.7	10.5	ns
Husband and wife courteous to each other	91.6	90.3	90.8	5.3	7.1	6.1	3.1	2.6	2.8	ns
Affirm and support each other	97.6	96.8	97.0	1.5	2.3	1.9	0.9	1.0	0.9	ns
Pleasant childhood for children	94.2	89.7	91.1	2.8	9.4	6.1	3.1	2.9	3.0	*
Cultural life	44.0	80.0	61.6	28.3	14.2	21.3	27.7	5.8	16.9	*
Stress on material life	25.5	43.4	34.4	20.3	28.2	23.6	54.1	28.5	41.6	*
Stress on religious life	58.0	13.9	36.1	18.7	32.3	25.5	23.3	53.9	38.3	*
Each child has a chance to grow	96.6	96.8	96.7	2.1	1.3	1.6	1.2	1.9	1.6	ns
Children make good grades	65.6	33.0	49.6	19.0	34.3	26.4	15.3	32.7	23.7	*
Two parents	58.3	80.5	68.8	13.2	12.3	12.8	28.5	9.1	18.2	*
Appreciate each other	95.7	86.8	91.1	2.8	10.3	6.6	1.5	2.9	2.2	*
Able to see positive things	75.7	93.6	84.0	14.2	4.8	9.9	10.1	1.6	6.0	*
Family takes priority over work	70.0	57.2	63.9	20.9	29.8	25.0	9.2	13.0	11.0	*

*p < .025

N = 326 (US sample); 316 (Taiwan sample); 642 (combined sample)

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TABLE 4

Pearson Correlations of the Evaluation of Family Life, Family Strengths and Social Demographic Variables

Demographic Variable	Family Strengths	Family Life Evaluation
Religion	r = 0.2896***	ns
Marital status	ns	ns
Number of siblings	ns	ns
Living parents	ns	ns
Parents' marital status	ns	r = -0.1177*
Individual church membership	r = 0.2196***	ns
Childhood happiness appraisal	r = -0.3349***	r = -0.367***
Religion and individual everyday life	r = 0.2824***	r = -0.0859**
Political views	ns	ns
Parents' marriage happiness	r = 0.2581***	r = -0.4631***
Religion and family's every day life	r = 0.2356***	ns
Attitudes toward having children	r = 0.3349***	r = -0.1052**
Individual attendance at religious services	r = -0.2341***	ns
Father's employment status	ns	ns
Mother's employment status	r = 0.0735**	ns
Age	r = 0.0376**	ns
Family size	ns	ns
Class level	ns	ns
Grades	r = 0.1515***	ns
Desire for children	r = 0.145***	ns
Individual employment status	r = 0.174***	ns
Part-time job during school	r = 0.0819*	ns
Financial decision making at home	r = 0.0838*	ns
Mother's responsibility for earning family income	ns	ns
Church member (parents)	r = 0.1347***	ns
Attendance at religious services (parents)	r = -0.1874***	ns
Religious activities	ns	ns

*p < .05; **p < .025; ***p < .001

TABLE 3

Family Life Evaluation

	Individual Family			Family at Large		
Value	United States	Taiwan	Total	United States	Taiwan	Total
1*	1.2		0.8	0.3		0.2
2	1.5		0.9	1.2		0.6
3	2.2		2.2	3.1		1.9
4	3.1		5.5	14.4		10.6
5	7.4		7.0	32.8		25.5
6	6.8		7.0	27.9		27.7
7	19.4		19.7	15.3		18.9
8	28.6		29.4	4.3		11.7
9	21.5		18.2	0.6		2.0
10	8.3		8.6	0.0		0.0
Mean Score	7.42	7.30	7.36	5.48	6.43	5.95

*1 = unhealthy; 10 = healthy

N = individual family, 635 (US = 325; Taiwan = 310); family at large, 637 (US = 326; Taiwan = 311)

TABLE 5

Opinions of the Causes of Family Problems

Social and Personal Factors	Opinions of Causes of Family Problems/High Divorce Rates (%) SA/A United States	SA/A Taiwan	SA/A Total	No Opinion United States	No Opinion Taiwan	No Opinion Total	DA/SD United States	DA/SD Taiwan	DA/SD Total	Chi-Square P Value
"Me" Generation	70.2	65.8	68.0	8.7	10.6		25.9	20.2		0.0002
Equality of Sexes	54.6	43.0	48.8	8.7	10.6		48.2	40.5		0.0055
Acceptance of divorce	70.3	61.5	65.9	13.9	9.9		24.6	20.4		0.0000
Career/success	60.9	60.9	60.9	11.0	13.1		28.2	27.9		0.0390
Unemployment	60.6	72.8	66.7	8.4	10.3		18.8	20.4		0.0094
Inflation	59.9	41.5	50.7	31.1	12.1		27.5	24.4		0.0000
Church	46.9	12.9	29.9	26.2	23.9		58.9	45.7		0.0000
Single lifestyle	38.6	45.0	41.8	20.7	23.5		34.3	37.1		ns
Family value	71.2	49.0	60.1	11.8	20.5		30.0	28.5		0.0000
Sexual diversity	60.6	51.8	56.2	23.9	10.6		24.3	23.1		0.0002
Women's lib	46.2	43.4	44.8	20.7	19.7		36.0	34.1		ns
TV	46.9	38.1	42.5	16.5	20.0		44.6	36.6		0.0001
Cohabitation	49.4	57.6	53.5	21.7	19.6		20.7	26.1		0.0001
Communication	85.2	92.0	88.6	3.9	5.2		4.1	5.4		0.0260
Child rearing	50.7	61.7	56.2	15.3	17.4		23.1	25.0		ns
Independence	53.3	53.1	53.2	13.4	15.2		33.5	30.4		ns
Lack of religious conviction	52.6	16.6	34.6	21.1	21.3		62.3	33.2		0.0000
Privacy	52.2	74.8	63.5	10.4	14.2		14.9	21.3		0.0000
Social pressure	57.2	63.0	60.1	19.5	18.0		17.5	20.8		0.0189
Sex role	45.6	46.9	46.2	16.5	17.4		36.5	35.5		ns
Live for today	49.3	44.9	47.1	24.6	22.5		30.5	28.2		0.0213

SA = strongly agree; A = agree; DA = disagree; SD = strongly disagree

TABLE 6

College Students' Attitudes Toward Different Family Lifestyles

Lifestyles	Attitudes Toward Different Family Lifestyles (%) SA/A United States	SA/A Taiwan	SA/A Total	No Opinion United States	No Opinion Taiwan	No Opinion Total	DA/SD United States	DA/SD Taiwan	DA/SD Total	Chi-Square P Value
Childless and marriage completeness	33.8	54.6	43.7	11.7	12.3	11.9	54.6	33.2	44.5	0.0000
Single parent and healthy family	15.7	70.9	42.6	9.5	12.9	11.3	74.8	16.2	56.0	0.0000
Cohabitation and healthy living arrangement	24.8	64.0	43.2	31.9	17.6	24.9	43.3	18.3	30.8	0.0000
Dual career and healthy family	24.3	15.9	20.1	8.9	8.7	8.8	66.7	75.4	70.8	0.0162
Acceptance of premarital sex	63.2	21.0	42.8	13.2	26.2	19.6	23.6	52.7	37.5	0.0000
Equal division of labor	82.8	91.6	87.8	7.1	5.8	6.3	10.1	2.6	6.5	0.0014
Family counseling	73.6	86.5	80.1	20.6	9.0	14.9	5.8	4.5	5.0	0.0005
Acceptance of divorce	64.3	89.0	76.2	12.9	5.5	9.2	22.8	5.5	14.4	0.0000
Family life today	40.3	45.8	43.0	23.4	21.6	25.6	36.3	32.6	34.3	ns

SA = strongly agree; A = agree; DA = disagree; SD = strongly disagree

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Notes

1. Question: How important is religion to you in conducting your (your family's) everyday life (activities)? (1) always important, (2) usually important, (3) no opinion, (4) seldom important, (5) never important.

2. Question: What is your attitude toward having children? (1) desire children very much, (2) mildly desire children, (3) no opinion, (4) mildly object to having children, (5) object very much to having children.

3. Q95. How important is religion to you in conducting your everyday life? (1) always important, (2) usually important, (3) no opinion, (4) seldom important. Q97. Are you a church member? (1) yes, (2) no. Q99. How often do you attend religious services? (1) never, (2) less than once a year, (3) about once or twice a year, (4) several times a year, (5) about once a month, (6) 2-3 times a month, (7) nearly every week, (8) every week, (9) several times a week. (Note: The response scores for Q99 have been recorded in a reverse "direction.")

4. An earlier version of this paper was published in Family Strengths 8-9: Pathways to Well-Being, Herbert G. Lingren, et al. (eds.), Linclon, Nebraska: University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 1987: 143-164.

Appendix 1

FAMILY STRENGTHS: PRIDE AND ACCORD
(Final Instrument)

	Factor Loadings			
	Sample #1		Sample #2	
Pride	Factor #1	Factor #2	Factor #1	Factor #
1. Family members respect one another.	.76		.75	
2. We share similar values and beliefs as a family.	.71		.72	
3. Things work out well for us as a family.	.69		.76	
4. We really do trust and confide in each other.	.69		.67	
5. Family members feel loyal to the family.	.68		.69	
6. We are proud of our family.	.67		.69	
7. We can express our feeling.	.59		.59	
Accord				
1. Accomplishing what we want to do seems difficult for us.		.64		.57
2. We have the same problems over and over.		.62		.66
3. There are many conflicts in our family.		.56		.60
4. We are critical of each other.		.54		.51
5. We tend to worry about many things.		.47		.48

Source: Olson, D.H. et al., (1982), p. 128.

Appendix 2

FAMILY STRENGTHS

PLEASE RATE THE FOLLOWING ITEMS AS THEY APPLY TO YOUR FAMILY:

	RESPONSE CHOICES				
	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Moderately Disagree	3 Neither Agree Nor Disagree	4 Moderately Agree	5 Strongly Agree

(+) 1. We can express our feelings.

(-) 2. We tend to worry about many things.

(+) 3. We really do trust and confide in each other.

(-) 4. We have the same problems over and over.

(+) 5. Family members feel loyal to the family.

(-) 6. Accomplishing what we want to do seems difficult for us.

(-) 7. We are critical of each other.

(+) 8. We share similar values and beliefs as a family.

(+) 9. Things work out well for us as a family.

(+) 10. Family members respect one another.

(-) 11. There are many conflicts in our family.

(+) 12. We are proud of our family.

*Source: Olson, D. H et al., (1982), p 128.

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